



The Guide



Co-funded by
the European Union



Cover and current page: pictures
by Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

TASTE

Rural development through experiential trekking

www.tasteoutdoor.eu



COMITATO
REGIONALE
UMBRO



Table of Contents

THE TASTE PROJECT

Creating thematic routes through outdoor sports **4**

BACKGROUND

The contact with the natural elements **8**

INTRODUCTION

Opening up perspectives **13**

CHAPTER 1

How to choose the physical and experiential destination for an excursion **18**

CHAPTER 2

How to identify a new walking route that includes local heritage points of interest **27**

CHAPTER 3

Techniques **33**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

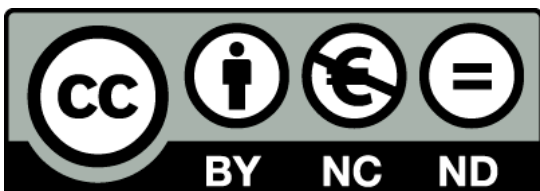
49



Co-funded by
the European Union

Project nr.10104995

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



This document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Creating thematic routes through outdoor sports

The proposal of the *TASTE – Rural development through Experiential trekking* project was generated by the growth of various types of niche tourism in recent years, such as adventure tourism, slow tourism, food and wine tourism, experiential tourism and the need to contribute to the sustainable development of European rural areas.

Project partners have observed the need to equip associations, NGOs and local entities with specific skills needed to grasp the huge potential of sustainable tourism and outdoor sports. The overall objective of TASTE is to build the capacity of local communities and stakeholders enabling them to promote their cultural and natural heritage through sustainable outdoor offers while encouraging the practice of health-enhancing activities.

Specifically, there will be a focus on **experiential hiking** and rural landscape enhancement. The natural and cultural heritage will become the raw material to design and shape excursions, and outdoor activities more generally in order to make them attractive to tourists and enthusiasts thus increasing participation





in outdoor sports and more in general in physical activities.

TASTE is based on the creation and dissemination of a participatory methodology and **community-based approach** aimed at encouraging sustainable and responsible types of tourism and mobility, compatible with the economy and the environment. The aim of the project is in fact **to help the staff of participating organizations increase their capacities for development**. This also includes the future beneficiaries of the results of the project, in terms of the development of sustainable rural tourism and the promotion of environmental-friendly practices and sports activities.

Together with the **TASTE Collection of thematic routes** (available from the project website by February 2024), this Guide provides the main results of the project. This Guide is based on the findings of the research activities implemented in partner countries in the early months of the project. In fact, with the aim of identifying useful considerations and suggestions for the preparation of the TASTE Guide, research activities have been implemented in Italy, France and Croatia. The research has been organized in two phases: the first dedicated to **detecting the needs of the hiker in the field**, the second to examining existing routes characterized by easily recognizable themes.

The first phase was the result of questionnaires submitted by by the Italian, French and Croatian partners to the excursionists who are members of the Ital-

ian, French and Croatian Partner Associations, and through focus groups by the French partner. The French partner was chosen on account of its recent experience in administering questionnaires, therefore considered more effective in managing research through focus groups as well as capitalizing on the experience gained.

The second phase was characterized by the identification of **three thematic routes for each of the Partners**, and therefore useful for comparing the needs of hikers with the existing routes on a specific theme. The **TASTE Joint Report** is the document that summarizes the results of the Field and Desk Research carried out by the project partners in their respective territories and jointly outlines the characteristics and considerations necessary for the drafting of the Taste Guide.

The findings emerging from both the field and desk research identify two areas of study to be developed. The first is dedicated to the territory, its vocation and the offer of services and equipment available. It is the “objective” side of hiking in the sense that a territory exists in itself and is in any case available to those who use it. The second area is “subjective” and refers to the interpretation of a territory and its potential.

This Guide for creating thematic paths therefore keeps these aspects in mind and provides operational tools aimed at facilitating the work.



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarius

The contact with the natural elements

Over the last twenty years or so, people have become aware of the importance of practising sport for health, well-being, challenge and the development of interpersonal relationships. They feel the need for **contact with the natural elements**.

Urban life, an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, the fascination with fast and easy car travel, individualism and the accent on consumerism have all been largely thwarted by health crises. The Covid 19 crisis forced people to stay put in their homes in Europe and around the world. It was an eye-opener for many practitioners, but also for those involved in communities, government departments, healthcare, education and cultural and social activities.

Although sports halls have not yet been abandoned, there is now also a parallel range of outdoor sports on offer. These offers are private or public, commercial, individual or associative, and thus form two complementary activities. Hence giving rise to this type of humour on social networks: Let's take a look at the definition of nature sports given by the European Community and the ENOS (*European Network of Outdoor Sports*) association:

"Nature sports [...] are practised in areas or on sites and itineraries that may include tracks, land or underground passages belonging to the public or private domain of public authorities or belonging to private owners, as well as public or private watercourses".

Nature sports are becoming essential for many European citizens; it is becoming necessary to develop them **in a sustainable way** in order to improve and perpetuate the benefits they provide (ENOS Charter 2013). The most popular sports are hiking, cycling and swimming. Current studies show that nature sports are widely practised individually or in groups, with little or no structure, within voluntary associations.

We are living in an era of climatic upheaval and the precariousness of natural environments, which are living environments for species of flora and fauna as well as for humans.

"As with biodiversity, which includes a wide variety of natural habitats and species of flora and fauna, there is also a wide variety of uses, including nature sports and leisure activities". (Benoît Pascault,





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

Project Manager, Nature Sports Coordinator, *Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Rhône-Alpes*).

To reconcile nature sports activities and natural heritage, cohabitation and the sharing of space requires concerted and shared management, as this guarantees greater local ownership and is the result of successful governance. Let's start with a few preliminaries to our thoughts on nature sports.

- These activities, including hiking, must be accessible to everyone, everywhere and in all types of weather.
- They represent a freedom offered to everyone by the private or commercial world, or by associations.
- They must be accessible to all, particularly in financial terms, as disadvantaged groups are often less inclined to take up nature sports.
- Because of the constraints of the rural and natural environment, nature sports require users to learn, to follow rules and practices that are carefully thought out, and even to practise under supervision.
- Nature sports, because of the risks they entail, can be dangerous in the same





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

way as other human activities. They must therefore be the subject of information, training and recommendations, even if they are the fruit of joint reflection, accessible to and subscribed to by the instructors and participants. Insofar as these best practices are the result of sharing between stakeholders and users, they must be developed in consultation and on the ground.

- We therefore expect nature sports to strengthen the links between the region's social, economic, cultural and tourist players.

In conclusion, let's hope that nature sports will assert themselves as a vector for social cohesion, equitable and ethical development, implemented by local players.

The aim of this handbook is to provide as much information as possible on how

to choose a destination, and how to perceive, apply and adapt the desire to roam and discover new hikes, for those working in the field, for volunteers and for those who wish to reach out to people who have little experience in these activities and who are far removed from commercial offers. It is aimed at these same volunteers, socio-cultural leaders, local economic development players, structured or informal associations and groups of individuals who would like to build a safe offer in line with sustainable development, the difficulties of climate change and the possibilities of participants.

Our aim is to provide a concise and practical overview. **It comprises three elements.**

For people with little experience in hiking and roaming, it's important to encourage



them to :

- **Find their way around, whether close by or further afield.** Urban walks are a great way to do this.
- **Discovering nature.** It's not uncommon in an urban environment to meet adults or children who have never travelled beyond the city limits, however small, except for administrative reasons or to visit suburban activity zones such as shopping centres, but rarely for leisure.
- **Understanding environmental cycles,** where what we consume comes from and how it is produced by local players.
- **A return to cultural heritage.** At a time when tales of history and adventure are flourishing on dedicated websites and screens, a return to local heritage redefines the identity of the walker.
- **Focus on caring for their bodies,** practising sports over long periods of time, repeatedly, to improve their health, or challenging themselves. Olympism and competition are not the only objectives of sport.
- **Agricultural producers,** including winegrowers, livestock farmers and local business leaders, meet the specifications for sustainable development:
- **Discover** an ancient heritage and know-how.
- **Explain manufacturing processes,** tools, improvements, constraints and give tours of the facilities.
- To explain the constraints associated with **preserving land and paths**, but also with today's trade.
- **To show and explain** the cultural heritage of our regions, and the difficulties involved in preserving, restoring and promoting it.

The convergence of all these desires and constraints may give rise to thematic or empirical projects linked to new modes of local or distant tourism. This will be the subject of the first part of this manual.

The second part of the project is **highly technical**, providing all the conditions for a safe nature sports experience, using modern tools. Participants will be able to take advantage of these tools, receive training and in turn propose new projects, using the "spin-off" technique. This section has been compiled by hiking guides and instructors who have been trained in this field by their federations. It meets all the requirements of safety, foresight and anticipation of possible events. In order not to overload this section, an index will be appended, enabling everyone to find the tools offered by various European countries.

Finally, the third part will look at a few examples of proposed itineraries:

- according to their length.
- cultural or natural heritage.
- showcasing an agricultural or, more specifically, wine-growing offering.

These examples were chosen by the participants in this project, based on the resources of the countries they visited: Croatia, Italy and France.

“ As with biodiversity, which includes a wide variety of natural habitats and species of flora and fauna, there is also a wide variety of uses, including nature sports and leisure activities. ”



Opening up perspectives

Numerous more or less specialised tour operators offer the chance to see, read about and discover new destinations in all accessible parts of the planet, by various means of locomotion, depending on location and distance, for treks ranging from three days to a month or more. The themes are varied, covering landscapes, mountains, the sea, fauna, flora, culture, heritage and much more.

Organising a walk can be a tricky business, as there are numerous administrative procedures and authorisation requirements. There's no room for improvisation when it comes to taking charge of a group or publishing a document for the public. However, today's agencies, which are still rare, offer themed trips that pay little attention to local customs, practices and products. They don't work with the local people, who may benefit financially from the stopovers, and they don't make a real contribution to local development and self-sufficiency.

The aim of this document is to provide tools to open up new perspectives that will enable new offerings to emerge in line with objectives that have been little discussed until now.

Objective 1

Satisfy an emerging demand, probably triggered by the recent global health crisis, with a desire for a **less passive holiday ex-**

perience, to observe, feel and taste the local environment. This **experiential tourism**, still in its infancy, takes its cue from the imagination, the emotions and the pleasure of discovering or opening up to exceptional encounters, whether social, intellectual, emotional or spiritual. This concept is based on four main ideas:

- Acquire new knowledge through immersion in the local culture;
- Stimulate the senses in rural and urban areas: venture into the unknown ;
- Become part of the journey ;
- Discover new ways of getting around.

These discoveries also provide an opportunity to learn about eco-responsible tourism and its benefits for the planet. In this way, the promotion of the act of buying is replaced by a beautiful travel souvenir.

Objective 2

Encourage more environmentally-friendly behaviour by adding or developing an educational aspect to the experiences, in order to involve participants in the protection and development of our natural and cultural heritage. Even if it cannot be "zero carbon", more sustainable tourism must :

- Make optimum use of environmental resources. This is a key element in the development of tourism, preserving essential ecological processes. It helps to safeguard natural resources and biodiversity.





- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, preserving their structure and living cultural assets and their traditional values. This contributes to intercultural understanding and tolerance.
- *“To ensure long-term economic activity that provides and distributes socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders including stable employment, benefit opportunities and social services for host communities, thereby contributing to reducing poverty.”* (International Labour Organization).

Objective 3

Prioritise experimentation in viticulture and agro-pastoral production, as part of a more sustainable development of the terroirs. This means making major choices with regard to the environment, climate issues and the biodiversity of flora and fauna. For example, ecotourism *“is defined as a global approach by the tourist visitor on the scale of the production and processing systems of grapes, combining both the economic sustainability of structures and territories, obtaining quality products, taking into account the requirements of precision viticulture, environmental risks, product safety and consumer health and the enhancement of heritage, historical, cultural, ecological and landscape aspects”*. (Territoires viticoles, October 2023).

Objective 4

Encourage local development of the producers themselves, providing them with access to the necessary tools through training and the exchange of practices that place people at the heart of the approach. For example, rural development programmes can support the Smart Villages initiative, which aims at providing multi-purpose tools. These will help to fos-



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium

ter and strengthen innovation in rural areas throughout Europe and address the most common challenges faced by their inhabitants.

Instead of relying on the desires and possibilities of rural participants, the regions have the opportunity to rely on **tourists’ curiosity** about their agricultural produce and their cultural and landscape worlds. This would encourage the emer-





gence of genuine products - fun, creative and innovative - designed to meet tourists' expectations. They would be distributed by a network managed by the producers themselves, grouped together in small communities in the same area. Concrete questions emerge from these four objectives, about the new local initiators and their needs to create and develop a new niche in the development of tourism.

This manual was commissioned by organisations that are benchmarks in the field of walking, hiking and nature sports. It is with the eyes and experience of the **long-distance walker** that we will attempt to answer the three main questions:

- What is the walker's aim, and what are we trying to achieve by directing our choices towards "remote" rural areas, where development is slow and respectful of time and space?
- Once this choice has been understood and integrated, the promoter of the walks will need to know who to contact, what the local constraints are and which institutions to contact. The concept of walking may be simple, but its application is more complex.
- What technical equipment do you need for a hike, whether for a day or a week?

As well as creating communities, such an approach should enable agri-tourism to develop and gain greater recognition. This represents a reversal of perspective, a vision of agriculture that is open to tourism and vice versa.





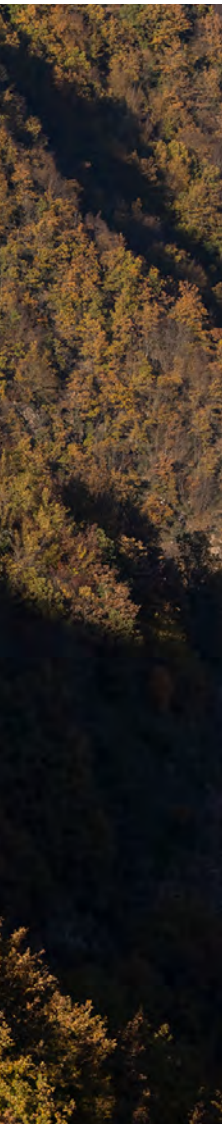
Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris



How to choose the physical and experiential destination for an excursion



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium



Every good trip starts with a destination. But there are many better destinations! Although paradoxical, the TASTE project is all about learning the true purpose of each stage and each experience. **Human adventures are born of need**, and hiking is no exception. It's not a "walk", it's always the result of a need, a fulfillment, a will or a desire. People have always explored, travelled and exchanged through new places, gaps to fill, material or existential questions. The "where" often becomes the place to leave our question, a distance to travel in order to obtain an answer. Place, history, landscape, feeling... there's always a reason why we put on our shoes and take to the road! When planning a trip, the first questions are: "Why?" and "Where are we going"?

A place is not defined by physical criteria alone. It bears witness to a history, an environment, a belief, a tradition and a culture, through those who have forged it. It is felt through voices, looks, writings, smells and tastes.

Aside from the visit, the place becomes **a genuine sensory experience**, fulfilling a need and filling a gap. Beyond these premises, here are a few pointers on how to choose an excursion destination. It's clear that it's impossible to draw up a classification or exhaustive list, given the complexity of human needs, which are so varied and personal that they represent an infinite potential. As a result, the "first excursion" should be seen as a return to oneself and to others, in order to understand the purpose of the search, the underlying reason, the needs and the definition of the objective!

“The highest mountain is still within us

Walter Bonatti

”

The question is why

Planning an excursion is not just a matter of anticipating the route taken by the body, but also by the mind. We have seen that, like any human experience, an excursion is the result of a need and a question, but no guide, however comprehensive, can provide the answers. The first question to ask yourself may seem simple and intimate: **"Why do I want to go on this trip?"** and "What's motivating me?" The answers are not as simple as they seem. Here are some ideas and questions to consider in advance:



- Is my aim offering a sensory experience? Seeing, listening, touching, smelling and tasting?
- Is my aim offering a spiritual experience? Introspection, relaxation, pleasure and socialisation?
- Do I want to seek to link sensory and spiritual experiences?

In these three cases, it is advisable to clearly identify the needs and define a location that could meet them. Here are some of the answers.

Types of destination

As we become more familiar with the concept of goal, and juggle with the subtleties of an inner quest, we find it useful to classify the different types of goal, in order to clarify their connotations. The list, as we have seen, cannot be exhaustive; a thousand pages would not be sufficient in cataloguing all the nuances of personal needs. We simply want to help you in your search, by identifying and describing some of them.

Destinations to awaken or satisfy all our senses

1. Gastronomic destination. “Immersive” par excellence, this destination involves all the senses, the intellect and the heart. It starts with the desire **to learn more about a product or flavour**, through tasting, but also through its history, its terroir, its creators, its manufacturing methods and the know-how that goes with it. Exercise your five senses, transcribe them and share them. A gustatory memory is found in the memory of an “omelette sandwich”, devoured during a childhood picnic in the company of cousins, a spicy bruschetta, with new olive oil at the table of friends in a beautiful village. Or that special wine discovered in a tavern whose existence was only known to an old man... Why is this what we remember? Our memory is activated by the emo-

tions generated by these foods and, in turn, strongly influences our gastronomic choices. The choice of gastronomic destination leads to greater knowledge of a product and offers a multitude of sensory and emotional experiences that could never have been anticipated!

2. Discovering the landscape. How many times has the discovery of a spectacular, breathtaking photograph made us want to go there? It brings to mind those moments when we had unknowingly planned a picturesque destination. But beware, we’re not just aiming at satisfying our visual sense, but we are attempting **to reproduce the emotion generated within us**. So let’s put on our shoes, not so much to get to the location where the shot was taken, but to relive the emotion, heightened tenfold by confrontation with the real setting, to the point of possible amazement.

3. Immerse yourself in the history and culture of the destination. Does your child want to study the chapter on “The Late Middle Ages”? Do you feel unusually apathetic when you hear talk of “Guelphs and Ghibellines”, the dynasties of kings and emperors? **Many historical periods and phenomena have left their mark in unexpected, secondary and even unknown places.** You can not only help to discover these places, but also the history that lies hidden within them. Often, in isolated churches, little-known villages or the most hidden ruins, there are signs or traces that you know from books or documentaries. There’s just one difference: the emotion of discovery and the resulting immersive experience will break the boredom generated by ‘academic’ history in a flash. Perhaps, then, we’ll remember the feats of arms that took place in these places and the men who lived, worked and died on these lands!

4. In search of an anthropological approach. In anthropology, our imagination immedi-







Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium

ately conjures up visions of tribes isolated for decades in the middle of the jungle, of gigantic monuments, mysterious rites and unknown languages. What we are proposing today is **something “just as extraordinary”**: try walking through the narrow streets of a small village, sitting with the old woman knitting outside her house. After a few minutes, she might tell the story of the recipe her mother used to cook, of the game she used to play in the square in summer during the village fete, of what is served for lunch on the day of the patron saint, its history and its miracles, turning you into an amateur anthropologist!

A destination for looking inward

The boundary between “outside” and “inside” is thin and permeable in the description of destinations, due to human

complexity. Let us repeat, then, that while it is impossible to establish a clear boundary between these categories, we are establishing this classification for simple descriptive purposes.

1. Destination relaxation and an inside look.

We combine these two concepts because they are often good friends. **Relaxation encourages introspection and vice versa.** Do you feel the need to give up the frenzy of routine, even for a few hours, the need to take refuge from noise, to be silent, in order to listen to that “something” inside you?

2. Socialisation and new relationships.

We are surrounded by people with whom we are increasingly connected virtually, at the expense of being physically close. There are places or contexts that offer an authentic social experience: spend-



ing the night in a mountain hut, in front of a fire in the company of other guests, warming up with a cup of hot chocolate, discussing your climb or the efforts of your hike and the wildlife you have encountered. It's more than sitting around a fireplace that makes us share our human nature with a stranger and recognise our otherness.

Clearly, each walker has his or her own goal or need to satisfy. This is how the project for a new themed route takes shape, is articulated and identifies the places where it is materially realised. In this respect, it's worth pointing out that the same route can be interpreted in different ways, depending on a given moment in life. In this sense, if the intention of the walk was gastronomic, it is necessary to look for gastronomic places that also characterise the area. It will still be interesting, and even necessary, to find other aspects in these same places that can satisfy other approaches to walking (landscape, culture, sport, etc.).

Each destination has its own "list" to identify the target group for the tour

Once we've discovered our destination, all we have to do is identify the place from which we can reach it. Here are a few checklists to help you do just that:

1. Destination ***Gastronomy and rural excellence***

- Which product is involved?
- Which region is this product typical of?
- Is the product linked to seasonality?
- Are there any companies or activities dedicated to the production or processing of this product?
- Are there already routes or trails dedicated to this product?
- Are there any publications that can give me more information about the product?

2. Destination ***Paysage***

- Do I know where I want to go?
- How far away is this place?
- Does reaching it mean travelling by other means?
- Is the distance limited to one or several days?
- Do ways to get there already exist?
- Can you get here in any season?
- Can I visit in special conditions (snow, flowers, etc.)?

3. Destination ***History and culture***

- What is the historical objective (period, event, character) that I want to focus on?
- Where can I find historical information about my goal?
- Are there any places revealed by these sources that are linked to my objective?
- Are there roads that reach these places?
- Are there any publications containing information on this location with reference to my objective?
- Is it possible to have a specialised guide on site?

4. ***Anthropological approach***

- What anthropological aspect (tradition, rite, language, etc.) do I want to know about?
- The anthropological aspect is typical of which region?
- Is this aspect linked to a particular time of year? (Think of traditions linked to particular festivals).
- Where can I find information about the anthropological aspect I'll be experiencing?

5. Destination ***Relaxation and inside look***

- Where would be a good place for my goal?
- Are there times of year when the site is not accessible?
- Are there times of year when it gets too busy?





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarius

- What activities linked to my trip could be useful in achieving my goal (meditation, spas, yoga, etc.)?
- How, where and when are these corollary activities available?
- How can my excursion be linked to this activity?

6. Destination **Socialisation and new relationships**

- What kind of social experience would I like to share?
- What paths or facilities could offer me such an experience?
- What time of year is the most suitable for the experience I'm looking for?
- Are there any corollary activities that can help me achieve my goal?
- How, where and when are these corollary activities available?
- How can this corollary activity be linked to my excursion?
- Are there ways of communicating with the communities I will be con-

tacting (social, community, etc.)?

From destination to place

Compiling the answers will help you to project yourself into the "physical" world, to find the goal that has so far remained in the abstract world of desires and needs. Other questions might include the following:

- Are there any routes or locations already connected to my goal?
- Is my objective linked to specific external factors?
- Are these external elements linked to a particular field?
- Are these external factors linked to a particular time of year?
- Does the area already have signposted paths?
- Are there any publications where I can find information on the purpose of my research?
- Are there related activities that can support my objective?



- Where and how can the activity be linked to the location or itinerary?

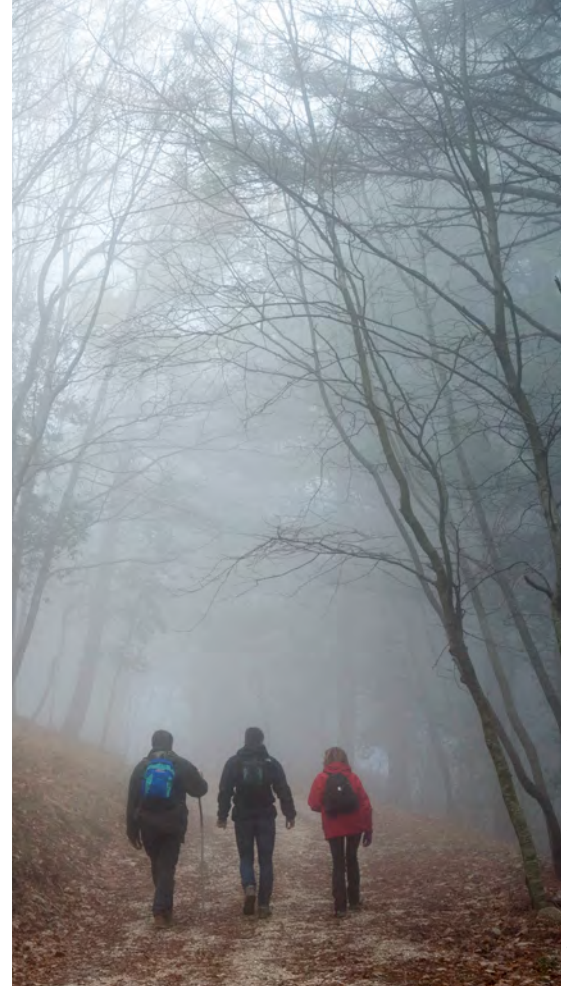
As you may have noticed in the previous examples and in this new list, the main questions to be studied are the following:

- **Spatial.** We need to ask ourselves immediately whether what we are interested in is already connected to a specific place.
- **Temporal.** Can our objective only be achieved at certain times of the year?
- **Parallel activity.** Are there any activities or experiences linked to the route or location that can help achieve the objective? How and where can I link this activity to my route or location?
- **Information.** Where can I find information about my objective? Can I find information before my experiment? Will I be able to find information directly at the time of my experiment?

No less important, we must pay particular attention to **safety**. Planning and organisation require precise preparatory work to minimise the risk of accidents. Assessing the skill levels required (physical, technical, but also emotional, such as vertigo) remains important. Is preparation necessary? Is on-site assistance required? Finally, weather conditions are another factor to consider; they may mean choosing a season that is suited to the location, to avoid inconveniences (snow, rain, wind, fire, high heat, etc.).

Planning work

As part of the useful guidelines for creating themed itineraries (polythematic in fact: cultural heritage, landscape, anthropological, gastronomic and wine, sporting, etc.), it is advisable to divide the work into phases in order to better plan the individual tasks. Below is a suggested outline.



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium

Search

An area is made up of many variants that determine its “vocation”; the mix of variants determines its conviviality. **Careful mapping of the characteristics and features enables us to understand their nature and to get a complete picture of the possible interactions** between the sectors, thanks to the involvement of those who live in the area and know it intimately, linked to the associative world (multi-sport clubs at various levels), to the categorical channels (accommodation and promotion), to the agricultural sector (educational farms, niche operators, quality producers), to the cultural structure (professional tourist guides and hikers, universities, libraries, foundations, municipalities). The mass of data collected will have its own thematic organisation which will take shape on the territory, mapped for better reading, at a usable scale.

Selection

Selection is the basic step in creating a



valuable 'product', and must consider several variants:

- the quality of local food,
- ease of use,
- seasonality,
- correlation with the "environment".

This operation, which is more "subjective" than others, is also essential for obtaining more convincing results in the future. On the other hand, an objective and rigorous approach will determine the success of the operation as a whole, over and above locations and short-sighted visions of the real features. The latter must be understood as points of interest aimed not only at a resident public, but also at an international public, with the most sophisticated appetites, for whom the 'product' must have the greatest rigour and reproducibility over time. Its implementation is linked to the nature of what you want to achieve, always respecting places and people.

Treatment

Once an initial choice has been made, different themes will of course persist. Clearly, no one route can cover all the themes mentioned above. **Different themes can be chosen, which will allow the chosen thread to be worked on and enriched, and thus determine the path.** As suggested above, the experiential approach will be the predominant and characteristic line to obtain an immersive and seductive "story".

Finalisation

Given the framework of our manual and the target audience, the promoters of these routes will be particularly careful **not to upset the social and environmental balance of the regions they pass through with an excessive flow of people.** The aim is to promote the regions as potential players, not as places to be visited by consumers of all kinds of experiences.



How to identify a new walking route that includes local heritage points of interest

Every project requires a fresh start. When talking about hiking or trekking trails, including points of interest, it becomes important to plan and project the expected results of the route. In addition, the project defines new routes that will enrich the offer of local or regional communities, hence the importance of identifying existing paths so as not to copy or repeat what is being developed.

The project is based on the offer of local agricultural producers, which can include those of cultural sites, traditional artefact makers and many others: these should be identified and included as a priority along the route. The final factor in identifying the route should include all the **logistical aspects** of getting to and from the route, all the facilities and all the relevant information for travelling the route safely and comfortably. There are three main stages in the design process:

- planning and design,
- data processing,
- the application.

First of all, it is necessary **to identify the particularities of the region or community** to include what is of particular interest or demand. Apart from being an incentive to start the route, good reviews afterwards could constitute the additional marketing value of the proposed route. At the planning and design stage, cases and readings need to be reviewed and evaluated. The factors influencing the evalu-

• • •

ation of walking routes should be determined and the dataset available to represent these factors should be identified. Data processing workflows should be planned based on the properties of the datasets, and criteria for evaluating factors should be designed based on the output of the data processing stage.

The cornerstone of a good itinerary is that of gathering the relevant data in a **database**. Pros and cons sheets should be formatted and subjected to a good SWOT analysis. In this analysis, we could define these criteria:

1. Reinforce

- gastronomic, geological, traditional and cultural heritage,
- know-how
- the qualities of the product with similar products
- in-house resources such as qualified, certified staff and project developers.

2. Weakness

- poor accessibility,
- unattractive profitability,
- technical difficulties in linking points of interest.

3. Deals

- possible support from local and regional (perhaps even national) institutions,
- interest in involving the local community,
- partnerships between points of interest (producers, museums, visitor centres, authorities).

4. Threats

- durability and longevity of the route,
- seasonal nature of the route.

At the processing stage, data sets will be acquired, examined, cleaned, modelled, analysed and visualised. Applications for planning walking routes will be proposed on the basis of the results of the analysis. To illustrate the results and provide examples of potential applications, pilot areas and routes with different walking scenarios will be selected.

In an attempt to identify the best possible route, including the combined points of interest, several scenarios should be **envisaged** and then **tested in real life**. Then, once each segment has been evaluat-



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

ed, the best one should be retained along the way. Here, it is necessary to take into consideration all the planned aspects of our route, i.e. the total length (in distance and time), the difficulty, the material and equipment potentially required, etc.

1. Land. The topography of a route affects the degree of difficulty of a hike. If the route is too steep or too long, less active hikers will be eliminated and the potential interest will be minimised.

2. Path condition. The condition of the hiking trails is another factor to be determined by indicators such as vegetation cover and difficulties involving specialised equipment. These conditions are also factors in the selection of participants.

3. Navigation. The availability of navigational information remains essential to help hikers find their way around. Distance, direction and information posts are always useful to help hikers. When adding points of interest along the route, it should be borne in mind that accurate and appropriate information must be provided in a clear way to help the participant complete the walk.

4. Hazardous areas. Priority should be given to assessing risks such as cliffs and hydrological lines, which represent a potential accident hazard. The same applies to areas that have undergone sudden changes, such as landslides. In addition to the “geomorphic” factors of the route, the following factors must be taken into account:





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

5. Access to attractions. The rural landscape is a great attraction for walkers, made all the more enjoyable by the sheer number of vantage points. The presence of cultural sites along the routes is also appreciated as a tourist attraction.

6. Leisure facilities. Leisure facilities provide entertainment along the journey. Picnic or barbecue sites, campsites, beaches and visitor centres are common features of the countryside. Their presence and number are taken into account when assessing leisure facilities.

7. Access to amenities. Access to water points and toilets is sometimes difficult in rural areas. The scarcity of such facilities along the route can annoy walkers. More facilities of this type would improve conditions.

8. Accessibility. The routes sometimes pass far from town centres, making it necessary to use public transport to reach them. This is why it is useful to mention parking spaces, bicycle depots, bus or minibus stops and any other facilities. Public transport can be used as an access or evacuation point. The number of bus or minibus stops within walking distance should be considered. Parking spaces, bicycle depots and other facilities are also valuable.

Once all this information - amenities, access, equipment required, etc. - has been added up and linked together and to the itinerary, the profile of the walk can be drawn up. The guide will also indicate how to reach the route by public transport, depending on the starting or finishing point, **in order to anticipate any difficulties partici-**



pants may have, as we saw above.

Next, the list should include points of interest: for example, anything to do with gastronomy. **Their number should take into account their duration and difficulty, and therefore the time needed to link them together.** The interval between these points of interest should be considered from the point of view of leisure and not of competition, which seems logical since, in the latter case, the landscape or various amenities count for little in the exercise of performance. Above all, the hike should remain a pleasant, convivial moment, a source of sharing.

Assessing the difficulties of the route must also form part of the study, which has repercussions on the budget required for its development and sustainability, from which these objectives emerge:

- **Capturing the essence of the landscape**, its authenticity and distinguishing it from similar trails in other areas, conditions that will attract future walkers;
- **Capitalise on the variety of its users**, whether they are sportsmen and women, leisure enthusiasts or disabled (where possible);
- **Ensuring everyone's safety** by complying with the regulations and codes governing the territories crossed, as well as with insurance contracts;
- **Protecting the landscape**, a common good to be preserved for future generations;
- **Providing services and facilities** to enhance the appeal of the route to walkers within a controlled budget. The presence of amenities remains an im-

portant factor in the reputation of a route.

The aim of listing these objectives is to encourage the local private and public sectors to get involved: the existence of a walking route can be a boon for tourism.

From this point of view, activities in the fields of wine and food, culture and heritage or sport should encourage financial participation in the local and regional spheres.

Drawing up a guide, and therefore planning the route, will bring together public and private stakeholders to create synergy around the project. These may include farming associations, local and traditional food and drink producers or processors, councillors and municipalities, craft and trade associations, local authorities at all levels, and possibly regional or national representative offices.

Given the nature of the project, tourist offices, agencies and tourist information centres will also be called upon to contribute.

It should be noted that this implementation takes into account both the feasibility of the path and the various activities in its vicinity, which guarantees its medium to long term sustainability in view of its attractiveness.

This calls for a rigorous planning approach, which must not lose sight of user satisfaction at the end of the walk.



Eleonora Cesaretti

Techniques

In this final chapter, we'll look at all the technical aspects that will help a hike to go smoothly. In trying to get away from the roads, cut across fields or reach a particular point of interest, hikers can get lost, cross private property, extend their route to cross a river or shorten their walk because of bad weather. To do this, the facilitator or guide will use various tools to help the candidate know what he is committing to and whether he has the capacity, time and strength. This forms the first part of this chapter.

This manual is largely based on the recommendations of the *Fédération française de Randonnée*, the *Italian Alpine Club*, the *Swiss and German federations* and the *FERP*.

Equipment to be mentioned on all hiking documents

What is needed for a day's outing, a few days' outing or a week's outing, should be mentioned for whoever reads the manual:

- clothing suited to the season, how to deal with gusts of wind or how to keep cool if it gets too hot,
- hats for the sun or against the cold,
- prescription glasses and sunglasses, for reading maps and identifying the landscape,
- gloves, scarves or neckbands, for the parts of the body that cool down most quickly,
- woollen socks to prevent injury, low or high hiking boots, depending on the terrain,
- sun cream, toiletries,
- a spoon,
- a cup.

Remember that you need to have **plenty of reserves, cereal bars and dried fruit with little sugar, and plenty of water**. We might expect children to drink larger quantities, but they become dehydrated more quickly and are often hungry. It's also a good idea to have :



- a knife to cut shoelaces or similar in case of injury,
- a headlamp,
- a small compass to help you find your way if necessary or to understand the terrain and landscape, and possibly a carabiner,
- a smartphone with local emergency numbers,
- a small pharmacy with scissors, tape, disinfectant and bandages,
- toilet paper,
- a lighter.

It is important that the hiker is informed of the **accommodation conditions**, and whether a sleeping bag, inflatable mattress or sheet is provided.

Remember also that you need to carry **identification papers, a sports licence or insurance certificate and a medical insurance document**.

Finally, the leaflet that will be prepared must include **emergency numbers** in the event of an accident. It is recommended that hikers keep a topographical map of the region, and a telephone on which to record the start and return points on a digital map such as *Google Maps*.

Adapt your rucksack to your hike

- For a day's hike, a 20-litre bag will suffice, allowing you to take photos and pack warm clothes, utensils and your map;
- If you're touring for several days, be careful with the weight of your bag: be sure your clothes have been washed, and it's really important to use a light bag for a

pleasant tour: 8 kg for women, 9-10 kg for men, not including water and meals;

- A solution can be proposed for longer journeys: the use of a luggage-carrying system provided by a local association or company.

Orientation tools

For walkers, finding their way is above all a matter of common sense and knowledge of the terrain, but knowing how to use the tools of the trade means you can hike with complete confidence. A map, compass, GPS and altimeter are essential for a good start, as are a few **notions of orientation, especially on an unmarked trail**.

Sight is everything. Knowing how to find your way is largely a matter of observing the terrain: the shadows of the sun, the north and south slopes, the moss on the trees, the direction of the wind, or... a constellation of stars. Don't neglect these natural clues, which will come in handy should your rucksack, compass, map and GPS get lost. It happens, even to the most experienced! The professionals repeat: you need to practise on your own, without instruments.

Next, a **map** (1:25,000 or 1:50,000 scale) is an invaluable ally. It allows you to prepare the route and create points (beacons) by precisely visualising slopes, talwegs, areas of forest, clearings or dwellings, and to create a 3D diagram. The instruments used - map, compass, altimeter, etc. - will necessarily differ depending on whether the terrain is mountainous or flat. When





in doubt, keep this rule in mind: keep risk-taking to a minimum (mandatory U-turn) if the only instrument available is common sense. On the other hand, we give ourselves the option of going further if we are well equipped.

In mountainous terrain: the **altimeter** (mechanical or digital, as many watches incorporate this function), because orientation is given by the relief. As it needs to be adjusted to the correct altitude and is based on atmospheric pressure, it will give you peace of mind for a good half-day and will not provide erroneous information. The **compass** is best used on hilly or flat terrain.

Some instruments, each with its own function, advantages and ease of use... Here's a brief update on the main instruments that may be needed:

1. The altimeter. An altimeter is an instrument that indicates your altitude above sea level. These days, it's rare to find a simple altimeter for hiking. They are combined with other devices: watches, GPS, smartphones, etc. Caution: check that the device is barometric. Knowing your altitude helps you to find your way around on a map and minimises positioning errors. It also lets you know, when ascending a mountain, how much differ-

ence in altitude you still have to cover to reach the pass, summit, etc. Disadvantage : it must be calibrated.

2. The compass. A compass (a simple compass with a magnetised needle) indicates the Earth's magnetic north and is mainly used to point the map in the right direction. **Note that it indicates magnetic north, whereas maps are oriented towards true north.** While the difference is minimal in France, in some parts of the world the magnetic declination (the angle formed by the difference between the two) is significant and it is important to take this into account. For orientation, it is more common to use a plate compass consisting of a graduated mobile dial, a tablet with a ruler, a marker and a sighting mirror... All these instruments can be used to orientate the map accurately, to follow an azimuth (a heading), to aim at a distant point, to consider magnetic declination... Of course, compass orientation requires a certain amount of know-how, which is important to learn before embarking on unmarked hiking routes. Advantages: reliable, lightweight and economical, with high precision. Disadvantages: using a platelet compass can be complicated for some people.

3. GPS. The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a widely used instrument. This instrument allows you to :

- instantly take stock of the situation and pass on contact details to any emergency services;
- download a map or the desired part of a map ;
- follow a prepared itinerary whatever the weather conditions, especially when it's foggy, and view your position on the screen in relation to the



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris



- recorded track at all times;
- record its track during movement and memorise a number of remarkable waypoints.

Whether on or off the trail, the controlled use of this device saves time and increases efficiency. The best way to use a GPS is to follow a route that has already been mapped out or imported into a computer. This route is prepared by going to a route tracing site on a map such as www.visugpx.com or, better still, with software such as GARMIN's Base Camp or TWONAV's Land. The software generates a GPX file which is transferred to the GPS. Tracing enables a route to be assessed, as it provides a profile on request and subject to certain conditions (in the case of cliffs, ravines, etc.). On the GPS screen, with or without a map background, you can see the route you have taken and a landmark represented by an arrow indicating where you are. So all we have to do is follow the trail on the ground. The arrow points in the direction of travel. When stationary, it takes up a position perpendicular to the path. Hiking leaders may know how to use GPS and GPX tracks, but this is often not the case for occasional hikers, for whom this is a sort of toy that should provide every possible service, but is much more complex to use than it seems (see *Altituderando Documents*). There are also applications such as *Iphigénie*. It provides excellent services to the general public, at a lower price. However, it is important to check the validity of the circuits to avoid unpleasant surprises.

4. The Galileo navigator, in every smartphone. In recent years, the Galileo system has come into being, an alternative sought by the European Union to meet the need for strategic autonomy. Today, many smartphones support this applica-



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarius

tion. The technology can also be found in cars and many other satellite-linked systems. The European Space Agency explains the choice of name [2008]: Galileo "is named after the famous Italian scientist Galileo Galilei, in tribute to his achievements not only in astronomy but also in navigation". In short, the "method of determining longitude [...] heralded a revolution in navigation, geodesy and cartography in the 17th and 18th centuries."





5. The map. Reading a map is like imagining the face and character of a region. It is an invitation to travel for the most dreamy and an essential guide for the most pragmatic, who need to find their bearings, assess the distance between two points, or understand the difference in altitude or the nature of the terrain, which could be perilous. A topographic map is a reduced representation of a geographical area seen from the air. Cartography uses basic rules and signposting that are important to know before starting a hike, whatever the accuracy or scale. Topographic map publishers include : IGN, Rando Éditions, Tabacco, National Geographic, Terra Quest, Anavasi, Cartographie du terrain, Alpina etc. It's handy to locate and point out a few specialised map shops, which can usually order what you need quickly:

- [La Compagnie des cartes in Paris](#)
- [The globetrotter Turin](#)



When preparing your route, **it's important to make sure that the map (or maps) covers the entire area chosen for the walk.** To check this, simply unfold the map and follow the route from start to finish. In France, the most widely used hiking maps are the IGN TOP25s, available at a scale of 1:25,000 on conventional or resistant media. In other countries, they may have different scales: 1:30,000, 1:50,000. Whether you're the publisher or the user, it's important to pay attention: distances can change considerably! Similarly, the spacing between contour lines, depending on the relief and above all what it represents: 5 m, 10 m or more, can be misleading. You should also be aware of the existence of **complementary maps**, which are not necessarily mentioned in the topographical guides. The question remains of how to teach occasional hikers how to read and use a map. Remember that the map remains a fundamental tool for preparation, ena-



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

bling you to locate yourself, find your way and orientate yourself. The map provides a great deal of information by means of the main acronyms in the legend box: roads - paths - power lines - rivers; village - church - watering holes; vegetation - forest and a reminder of the distance between two contour lines and the direction of the writing for ascending and descending; lastly, to provide GPS landmarks. However, it is not always easy for beginners to imagine the terrain around them by reading a map. If the route description is unambiguous in explaining how to use a map, it is to the user's advantage to learn about cartography, even if only briefly, and to acquire autonomy, which is synonymous with pleasure and safety.

Assessing the difficulty of a ride

"Hiking has the advantage of being a particularly accessible sport. There are routes for beginners and experienced hikers of all categories. However, it's not always clear whether a particular route is considered easy or difficult. Yet it is essential to know whether you can complete it safely, estimate how long it will take to complete it, know whether it will be a digestive walk or whether you'll end up on your kneecaps, and so on. By the way, what is a difficult hike? What criteria are used to determine the level of complexity of a route? That's what we'll be looking at in this article. Today, I'd like to give you a brief overview of hiking rating systems. Whether it's the FF Randonnée's harmonised rating method, the 'home-grown' systems of certain guidebooks or the quotations used in other countries, let's take a look at the different ways of estimating the difficulty of hikes. While we await the coordination of rating methods in the various countries to be organised, we will use that of the Fédération française de Ran-



Eleonora Cesaretti

donnée, which is probably a little complex, but which has tried to take as many parameters as possible into consideration. We'll also be offering a few other methods, including the Swiss one, and we'll be looking at how to translate it so that it's accessible to users". (The French Hiking Federation's grading system: a grading method based on effort, technicality and risk - Source FF Randonnée)

To prevent hikers from taking on trails that are too difficult for their level, the French Hiking Federation and the Ministry of Sport have worked to introduce a harmonised grading system for hikes and GR trails. It is intended to be both precise and easy to understand. **It is based on three criteria: the degree of effort, the technical nature of the hike and the risk of falling. Each criterion is divided into 5 levels, from the easiest to the most difficult.** In theory, for each hike, these quotations can be found in the form of small pictograms in the guides published by the Fédération française de Randonnée.

1. The effort. The first criterion taken into



account is effort, i.e. the physical difficulty of the hike. To find out the effort index, IBPindex, in partnership with the French Hiking Federation, has created a tool that calculates it using GPS markers. To access it, simply go to the index analysis page and load the track in the field in question. Most formats are accepted (PLT. TRK... GPX. TCX. CRS. FAIT... KML. KMZ). The tool analyses the file and automatically calculates the degree of physical difficulty of the route based on its length and altitude. The result is a score that indicates the level of effort required:

- 0 to 25: level 1 (easy). The walk involves no physical difficulty.
- 25 to 50: level 2 (fairly easy). The physical difficulties are present, but very limited.
- 50 to 75: level 3 (not very difficult). The physical effort required is reasonable and moderate.
- 75 to 100: level 4 (fairly difficult). The effort required is sustained and the physical difficulty is considerable.
- 100 and over: level 5 (difficult). The effort required is substantial. These hikes require real physical preparation.

To make it easier to read the levels, the scoring system is also based on a colour code similar to that used on ski slopes.

2. Technical. Technical difficulty is assessed in relation to the terrain and the obstacles it presents. Here, there is no online tool for assessing this criterion. It is assessed directly on the ground according to the difficulties present on the course. Here are the technical levels used by the French Hiking Federation:

- Level 1: the route has no obstacles, the terrain is flat and the footing is easy.
- Level 2: the course or one of its sections has low obstacles (less than 10 cm) and it is fairly easy to get your footing on comfortable surfaces.
- Level 3: There may be obstacles on the trail no higher than knee height, and the

foot may be placed on uneven surfaces, but there are areas with good grip.

- Level 4: One or more hip-high obstacles are present; the terrain is uneven and the use of trekking poles is recommended.
- Level 5: the route has relatively high and difficult obstacles, the use of the hands is necessary, the terrain is very uneven and poles can become an obstacle to the hike.

This is the highest level of technical difficulty encountered, not an average. It only takes one technically difficult obstacle for the level to be high.

3. Risk. Finally, the risk taken into account in this hiking rating system: the danger of falling. Here, the topography of the terrain is analysed. A fall on a forest path or on the side of a cliff does not have the same consequences. Here again, there are 5 categories, from the least risky to the most dangerous:

- Level 1: the risk of injury in the event of a fall or landslide is very low or non-existent (this refers to the additional risk associated with the configuration of the terrain).
- Level 2: "Minor" injuries such as sprains are possible in the event of a fall.
- Level 3: Certain sections carry a proven risk of serious injury (such as fractures).
- Level 4: the route includes one or more sections with dangerous passages. There is a real risk of serious injury or death.
- Level 5: Tour considered very dangerous. A fall can result in fatal injuries.

Unfortunately, there is no online tool for analysing this difficulty criterion. So if the guidebook does not mention how dangerous the hike is, you will have to estimate it on the basis of your observations.

The limits of the Fédération française de Randonnée's rating system

Although this rating system is relatively





Eleonora Cesaretti



Eleonora Cesaretti

complete, it is not infallible. The fact that the degree of technicality and risk is assessed mainly on the basis of observations in the field is already a limitation (and what about the routes that have not yet been assessed?). It is therefore essential to prepare and go over the proposed itineraries carefully, gathering as much information as possible about the routes taken. It's a good idea to discover "alternative routes" or diversions in case certain sections prove to be too technical or dangerous. What's more, the level of technical difficulty only **takes into account the level of the most technically difficult section**. There is a big difference – both physical and mental – between :

- A level 5 technical hike with sections mainly at levels 1 and 2 and a single section at level 5, and :
- A technical level 5 route with a multitude of level 5 crossings interspersed with slightly easier sections.

It should also be borne in mind that these levels of difficulty are determined for **favourable weather conditions**. In the event of rain, snow, fog or strong winds, a path considered easy can quickly become much more difficult or dangerous. Finally, these hiking ratings do not take into account **other variables** such as level of preparation, equipment, weight of rucksack, etc. Itineraries for people with sensory, mental or physical disabilities may be available. However, the regulations, which are often very strict, vary greatly from one country to another, and it is practically impossible to draw up an exhaustive list. While no one should be deterred, it is also undesirable to put hikers in difficulty. This means that it is essential to carry out reconnaissance at different times, in order to identify all the possible obstacles to good progress.

Similarly, care should be taken on "family" tours, as children may not be able to overcome obstacles because of their size. Specific hazards, such as rocks, slippery terrain and the risk of dizziness, also need to be specified, as do any factors that may prevent smooth progress.

Examples of foreign rating systems

Here's a quick overview of the difficulty levels of hikes in Switzerland, Italy and other countries.



Eleonora Cesaretti



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginaris

1. Switzerland. One of the most common rating systems is that of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC). Hiking trails are divided into 6 categories, ranging from simple to difficult alpine hikes. Where trails have been marked by the FSTP (Fédération suisse du tourisme de randonnée), you can get an idea of the difficulty of the hike from the colour of the markings. Here are the different levels of difficulty and the associated markings:

- T1 - Hiking: yellow marks.
- T2 - Mountain walking: white-red-white markings.
- T3 - Demanding mountain hikes: white-red-white markings.
- T4 - Alpine touring: white-blue-white markings.
- T5 - Demanding alpine hikes: white-

blue-white markings.

- T6 - Difficult alpine hikes: no specific markings.

More details on the Swiss ads are available on the CAS website.

2. Italy. On the other side of the Alps, the difficulty scale for hikes has 3 +1 levels. Here is the information available on the Club Alpino Italiano website:

- T (Tourist): tourist itinerary with no particular difficulty that can be completed without equipment.
- E (Hiking): A fairly straightforward hiking trail. The paths are visible and signposted, and there may be a rise in elevation. The hike requires suitable footwear and a little preparation.
- EE (For experienced hikers): Difficult trail.





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium

The route has several obstacles and requires some experience of walking in an alpine environment.

- EEA (qualified and equipped hikers): as described above, but specific equipment is required in the event of a fall (via ferrata type).

3. In other countries. Other countries use general indications that are more mountain-oriented. These apply to mountaineering as well as hiking and climbing. This is particularly true of the Yosemite decimal system, which is sometimes found in North America (USA and Canada). It should also be noted that many countries simply do not have a harmonised rating method and that each region, nature park or locality uses its own system.

Examples of non-harmonised tour systems



Finally, there are many other **non-harmonised hiking rating systems**. Despite their differences, they generally work in the same way, with a few exceptions. They are mainly based on distance, walking time and elevation gain. These 'home-made' difficulty levels are used by :

- tour operators,
- hiking applications,
- guides not published by the French Hiking Federation (such as those available from Tourist Offices, for example),

Levels of difficulty can be indicated in full (easy, intermediate, difficult, etc.), or in the form of numbers or symbols, such as shoes, small mountains, etc. It all depends on how creative the authors are. If quotations are given as symbols, a legend indicates their correspondence. A hike marked "3/5" or "4 shoes" doesn't mean much

without a proper explanation.

Beaconing

Interpretation of the marking system remains essential when preparing an outing in a natural environment. **Hiking markings** are the best way of finding your way and completing an itinerary without getting lost, in many countries around the world, as they indicate the precise direction to follow. It's important to remember that many trails are not waymarked, and that you shouldn't confuse a hiking trail with a hunter's trail, or even a wild boar or chamois trail! The choices made by teams of guides, their federations and the countries they visit can vary greatly depending on local practices. Protected areas or even areas where no human beings are allowed. While it may seem simple to follow a signposted trail, it can be easy to get lost if you can't read the signs. GR, PR, wrong direction, colours, mountain bike or equestrian markings, etc. The markup contains a certain amount of information to be remembered.

In several countries, different coloured marks can be seen, either because of the history of a mountain range, or because of the proximity or level of difficulty of a hike. **In France and Italy, the markings can be directional.** The aim of the hiking markings is to provide users with safe access to the various paths, and to guide them clearly from the beginning to the end of their route so that they feel secure. Within the framework of the circuits proposed in this handbook, we can recommend the use of these marked paths for occasional walkers, looking for an experience as well as a heritage or gastronomic discovery.

What are the different types of beaconing? In order to adapt to different terrain while remaining as visible as possible, hiking markings take many forms: paint, stick-

ers, plaques, hiking signs, directional posts, etc. However, it is important to remember that **markings do not always exist**, that they can be removed, and that the passage of anyone walking on the land of an owner, whether public or private, has been authorised. So a quick reminder when documenting a hike: don't leave any trace of your passage.

Hiking signs are orientation aids that can be seen from a distance. Placed at the start and in the middle of the route, they act as markers and informers, indicating not only possible directions, but also giving a certain amount of information about the route being followed and the surrounding roads.

1. Posts are widely used as markers on hiking trails with little or no marking, where there are no trees, such as at the edge of fields or in the mountains for snow-covered trails. The direction is often engraved on the posts, painted or indicated by a plaque or sticker. Highly visible, they are particularly useful on roads in poor weather conditions that make visibility very difficult, such as heavy rain or snow. They complement road markings, which can be old.

2. Cairns are piles of stones, often historic, erected by other walkers at the edge of a path. Like other forms of waymarking, cairns are used to show the way, but can also indicate the summit of a peak or the presence of a cave. Unofficial landmarks, they are also often used in the absence of a signposted path, particularly on rocky ground or a glacier.

3. European trails. Specific signposting is reserved for European trails, which often follow national trails: There are currently 12 of them, maintained and waymarked by local people; they cross Europe from end to end and are, quite rightly, the





Eleonora Cesaretti



Eleonora Cesaretti



pride of the European Ramblers' Federation (FERP). In addition, there are an increasing number of themed signs, pilgrimage route markings and historical trail markings. Europe is criss-crossed by a large number of routes, some of them named, others numbered. Italian routes often have names, but are also numbered by the Italian Alpine Club (CAI), while French topoguides are referenced by numbers.

4. More atypical forms of hiking signposting. As well as the main shapes and marker holders, there are other more unusual hiking symbols. For example, there are ribbons or banners hanging from trees, lights or engraved arrows. Marks can even be found on traffic lights, lampposts or street furniture in towns and small villages.

Belief

On many itineraries, pilgrimage or otherwise, a dashboard can be issued, i.e. a booklet to be stamped at each stage.

Housing

When you're on the road, it's a good idea to plan everything logistically, in particular accommodation, services (post office, telephone, laundry), shops and medical services (pharmacy and doctor).

When it comes to end-of-day meals, caution is the rule when it comes to reservations. It is becoming increasingly difficult to travel alone or in a group without a reservation. The type of accommodation you choose for each stage depends of course on the difficulty and length of the journey you are covering, as well as the possibility of half-board (which means you need to know how to prepare hiking meals!) and the possibility of having a morning snack and a meal for the lunch break. Hiking is best done after a good night's sleep and



a shower, even in basic comfort! It is essential to provide **lists of accommodation** so that users, whether they are walking for several days or get lost, can set off again after warming up, eating something and getting a good night's sleep. In some cases, the recovery point may not be far from the route, so it's important to make a note of this.

The main possible indications

- Stopover gîte, hotel, bed and breakfast, campsite.
- Refreshments, restaurant, café, grocery, chemist, walking bazaar.
- Tourist Office, Guides Office.
- Bus, train, ATM.

Mileage, altitude and timetable

1. Mileage. This is an essential piece of information that should be given to the hiker, who is generally aware of his or her capabilities. It is quite possible to give some indication of breaks: every hour, with a light carbohydrate supplement. Mileage is often indicated on signs and is generally very reliable.

2. The difference in altitude. The cumulative elevation remains important, but so does the profile of the route, even in simplified terms: it's not the same to climb 800 m in a single ascent or 3 successive climbs. What's more, if the path is steep, it will be shorter, but perhaps much more tiring on arrival. However, there are some good indications:

- The effort kilometre: for every 300 m of positive ascent, 1 km is added.
- 300 m (altitude) difference in altitude in 15 minutes
- Count on an increased speed of 1/3 of the descent, without running.

3. Timetable. How fast can we walk? Walking together and overcoming obstacles does not presuppose setting a timetable.



Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarius

It's probably more useful to indicate an hourly average of 3.5 to 4 km/h. It's up to you to make your own calculations, otherwise the timetables are often too fast.

Checklist for hikers

Now that all the tools have been shown to the hiker, it's time to create one specifically for him:

1. Equipment.

- Equipment required (safety). What



you'll need: three-layer clothing, sun protection, protection from the cold, protection from the rain, map and compass, telephone, appropriate footwear, water, food, first aid, survival blanket, solar or conventional battery.

- Useful equipment (comfort). Useful: canes, lighter, knife, toiletries, water filter, headlamp, GPS, altimeter, binoculars, etc.

Add tent, mattress, sleeping bag and cooking equipment if you're travelling on a bivouac.

2. Project configuration. Define the location, duration, period and difficulty required (challenge, culture, change of scenery, etc.).

3. Hardware. The rest is up to the hiker: curiosity, a website, word of mouth, tourist offices, hiking committees, etc.

4. Create route. Assess the terrain (distance, altitude, duration, accommodation, what to see, etc.) to create customised stages.

5. Equipment: IGN map, topoguide®. Plan extractions in the event of serious problems (illness, weather).

6. Protecting yourself from unforeseen situations. If you are going on a solo trip, give your friends and family the full programme (days, stages, itinerary).

7. Digital route planning.

- Create the circuit digitally using gpx and insert it into an appropriate device;
- Creation software: visugpx, visorando, geoportail, komoot (adaptable only on komoot), etc. ;
- Insert it into a GPS or phone via : Ma Rando, Igpviewer, etc.; in the phone as a last resort (the data is not reliable, the network is not good, the batteries are weak).
- Follow the itinerary on the day.

8. Map, compass, binoculars, guidebook, GPS, signs, information panels. Telephone in the event of serious difficulties

9. Weather. How can you go hiking if you don't know the basics about the weather? It is therefore important for the promoter to be familiar with the conditions and climatic variations of the places where he wishes to take hikers, and to point out the importance of the weather for a good hike: avoid showers, storms, travelling on the banks of a stream or river that is overflowing, or on the contrary, near dry springs and fountains. While consulting weather reports is essential, you can also keep track of the weather by observing the sky and using your altimeter. Without playing meteorologist, we can interpret a minimum of atmospheric signs. When the weather is apparently fine, certain signs indicate that it is getting worse. There are many guides and books on this subject.

10. Monitoring the barometer or altimeter. The barometer measures atmospheric pressure, expressed in hectopascals (hPa). 1013 hPa is the average value at sea level. A value below 1013 hPa indicates a depression. A value above 1013 hPa indicates a high-pressure system. In the mountains, the altimeter can be used as a barometer. If you stay at the same actual altitude and the altimeter 'rises' (normally indicating a higher altitude), this means a drop in pressure and therefore a tendency towards bad weather. On the other hand, an altimeter that tends to 'sink' (normally indicating a lower altitude) will reflect an increase in atmospheric pressure, and is therefore a sign of good weather.





Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium

Acknowledgments

The TASTE Guide is a product made by:

- **Kristian Batelić**, Istarska sportska akademija
- **Claudio Bizzarri**, Parco Archeologico Ambientale dell'Orvietano
- **Erika Bizzarri**, Parco Archeologico Ambientale dell'Orvietano
- **Laurent Bonzi**, Fédération Française de la Randonnée Bouches-du-Rhône
- **Eleonora Cesaretti**, Associazione Trekkify
- **Nadine Carceles Frstemjak**, Fédération Française de la Randonnée Bouches-du-Rhône
- **Armelle Domenach**, Edition Scribe
- **Dario Jagić**, Istarska sportska akademija
- **Predrag Marinkovich**, Istarska Sportska Akademija
- **Irene Morici**, Associazione Trekkify
- **Marianne Moukomel Clarté**, Fédération Française de la Randonnée Bouches-du-Rhône
- **Stefano Paggetti**, Associazione F.I.E Comitato Regionale Umbria
- **Luca Pagliaricci**, Associazione Trekkify
- **Stefano Pasquini**, Associazione Trekking Nocera Umbra APS
- **Claudia Parroccini**, Associazione Bagnara APS
- **Salvatore Spiga**, ASDS Majorana Trekking APS
- **Aurélia Vey**, Fédération Française de la Randonnée Bouches-du-Rhône

Pictures courtesy of **Stefano Pasquini-Imaginarium** and **Eleonora Cesaretti** under the license CC BY-NC-ND.

